

## Calif. groups want state to study smaller tunnel

By GOSIA WOZNIAKA, Associated Press

Updated 12:12 pm, Saturday, January 26, 2013

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — A half-dozen water agencies have cast their lot with environmental groups in calling on California to study a scaled-down alternative to the \$14 billion Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta tunnels endorsed by Gov. Jerry Brown to bring water from north to south.

Proponents say a single, smaller tunnel coupled with investments such as water recycling and desalination would result in more water for cities and farms. They say it also would be better for the environment and cost less — with construction estimated at \$5 billion to \$7 billion.

Agricultural groups say a scaled-down water conveyance would be devastating to farmers in the Central Valley, who rely on the delta to irrigate thousands of acres of crops.

The proposal is a sign of how California's water wars have evolved.

"The big fight over the delta used to be between environmentalists and thirsty cities who wanted more water," said Barry Nelson, senior policy analyst at Natural Resources Defense Council, which supports the alternative. "But now, there's a growing list of cities whose plan it is to become less reliant on the delta and to invest in local solutions. There's common ground there."

The health of the delta, the hub of California's water delivery system, has long been deteriorating. Massive pumps which draw drinking water for more than 25 million Californians and irrigate vast expanses of crops are blamed for declines in once-abundant fish populations.

Declines in tiny delta smelt, salmon and other species have spurred regulations that curtail delta pumping. In dry years, limited water deliveries have led some farmers to let fields lie fallow and communities to impose water-use restrictions.

In July, Brown and Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced support for massive 35-mile twin tunnels to carry water south. The proposal also includes plans for more than 100,000 acres of floodplain and tidal marsh habitat restoration.

The project, called the Bay Delta Conservation Plan, must satisfy two goals: restore the estuary's fragile ecosystem and provide a more stable water supply to residents and farmers.

Officials say the tunnels would divert water beneath the delta, lessening the impact of pumps on fish. The amount of water to be diverted would be determined once the project is built, based on the health of the species.

The entire project would cost \$23 billion. Water agencies would pay \$14 billion for construction and \$5.8 billion for operations. Some \$3.2 billion for habitat restoration would come from a voter-approved bond on the November 2014 ballot.

During his State of the State address Thursday, Brown said construction costs would be similar to the London Olympics. "But this project will serve California for hundreds of years."

Environmental groups and seven water agencies want the state to examine their newest proposal as a stand-alone alternative during the environmental review process, which is to be completed by the end of the year. State officials will decide whether to include the new alternative for consideration.

In addition to a smaller conveyance and investment into local projects, the new proposal includes strengthening delta levees to protect the water supply from earthquakes, investing in more south-of-delta storage, and 40,000 acres of habitat restoration. Total cost is estimated at \$14 billion to \$16 billion.

Following the Legislature's 2009 mandate to reduce reliance on the delta, many urban and agricultural water agencies have been developing innovative local projects and water efficiencies. But those measures are not being considered by the state, said San Diego County Water Authority's assistant general manager Dennis Cushman. San Diego, which supports the new proposal, serves 3.1 million residents in San Diego and 23 other cities and agencies.

"It's critically important to first understand what the real demand for water from the delta is, before decisions are made about project size, scope and cost," Cushman said.

The San Diego County Water Authority once got 95 percent of its water from the Metropolitan Water District, the giant Los-Angeles based wholesaler which gets water from the delta and the Colorado River.

But by developing various local projects, San Diego now gets only half its water from MWD.

Cushman said investing in two pricy delta tunnels might not make sense for his district.

"The state's approach right now is to build the biggest project they can build, invest \$14 billion and find out 10 years down line what supply water districts get," Cushman said.

To environmentalists, making a water project affordable for the water agencies that will finance it is key.

"If the project proposed by the governor cannot be paid for, that would leave us with the status quo and the species would continue their march to extinction," said Jonas Minton, water policy adviser for the Planning and Conservation League.

State officials say they already are examining a smaller tunnel alternative. That alternative does not include local water supply development or other aspects of the new proposal, because the BDCP is focused on delta conservation, said Karla Nemeth of the California Natural Resources Agency.

"We won't get any credit for preserving the delta smelt because of a local water supply project in San Diego," Nemeth said.

Agricultural groups and water districts say the new proposal would leave farmers high and dry.

"The proposal doesn't provide enough water to meet agricultural needs," said Mike Wade, executive director for the California Farm Water Coalition. "Developing local supply projects is a fine idea, but they don't address water reliability."

A scaled-down conveyance, Wade said, could lead water contractors who serve farmers to continue relying on the existing delta water conveyance — meaning fish would continue being dragged into the pumps and killed.

A small tunnel would also not allow the shipment and storage of larger amounts of water during wet years, thereby making the water supply less reliable during dry years, he said.

While agricultural water districts are developing water efficiencies, they'll still need plenty of water from the delta to irrigate crops, said Brent Walthall, assistant general manager, Kern County Water Agency, which mostly serves farmers and has not taken a position on the tunnel proposals.

"We're hoping the water project will be successful," Walthall said, "and that it's affordable for us."

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# SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN™

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## Can Silicon Valley Adapt to Climate Change?

The high-tech mecca will have to focus its short attention span on long-term planning for sea-level rise and other global warming impacts

By Anne C. Mulkern and ClimateWire | Thursday, December 20, 2012 | 6 comments

MENLO PARK, Calif.—The headquarters of Facebook sits on a sprawling campus beside San Francisco Bay, a scenic location with water bordering three sides.

The 57-acre site features two- and three-story office buildings in shades of red and orange, outdoor basketball hoops, and sofa-sized benches on large lawns. Just outside the property, however, is a reminder that this location has a major drawback.

A roughly 8-foot levee curves next to Facebook's land. Built when Sun Microsystems owned the spot in the 1970s, the grass-covered buttress holds back water from the east. Another barricade on the north blocks the daily high tide.

As seas rise because of climate change, however, those barriers won't be enough, said those studying options to protect California's Silicon Valley.

Facebook's site at 1 Hacker Way "is pretty much surrounded by tidal waters," said Eric Mruz, manager of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, which abuts the social media giant's campus.

"Facebook is going to have to deal with sea level rise," Mruz said. "It's going to be a huge threat, with sea level rise projections skyrocketing now. They will definitely have to do something with their levees to protect their property."

Facebook is just one of the well-known companies in Silicon Valley's technology mecca that will face the effects of climate change in years ahead. Others located near the water here include Google, Yahoo, Dell, LinkedIn, Intuit, Intel, Cisco, Citrix and Oracle. Scientists predict seas will climb as much as 16 inches by midcentury and 65 inches by 2100. Storms are expected to intensify and occur more often. Both pose dangers for businesses and homes near the bay.

Yet Silicon Valley, a place that in many ways creates the future through technological advances, largely has yet to tackle the repercussions that climate change will bring in years ahead, several people said.

### 'They don't think long-term'

The life cycle of products made in Silicon Valley is "so short they don't think long-term," said Will Travis, senior adviser to the Bay Area Joint Policy Committee, which coordinates regional planning.

It's a conflict some are working to change. The region will have to start addressing the coming threats, Mruz said.

"It's imminent," Mruz said. "There's no question in my mind; everybody around the bay, we're going to have to do something, at every spot around the bay."

Much of the Golden State's coastline is at risk, experts explained, but Silicon Valley -- home to 3 million people -- is particularly vulnerable. In the early 1900s it was a series of orchards known as Valley of Heart's Delight. As water was pumped up for irrigation, the ground sank.



**ON THE WATER:** Facebook's headquarters campus is surrounded on three sides by water, and already requires a levee to keep it dry.

*Image: flickr/Jitze Couperus*

As a result, Silicon Valley is 3 to 10 feet below sea level, Travis said. Dirt levees exist but don't ensure protection. They weren't engineered but were pushed together when businesses later cleared land to create ponds for harvesting salt.

A draft study from the Army Corps of Engineers found that an extreme storm coupled with higher seas could top them and devastate homes and businesses.

"Starting out, they're already 10 feet below sea level," Mruz said. "If they had no levees in place, that water would be miles inland already. Add sea level rise on top of that, you add storm surge on top of that."

"All of these businesses, Silicon Valley basically backs right up to the bay," Mruz added. "You have all of them, Yahoo, Google, all right there. Without some type of flood protection potentially in front of that, you could flood that whole area. You're talking billions of dollars."

There aren't firm numbers on how much is at risk in Silicon Valley should seas rise as predicted. Santa Clara County -- located 45 miles south of San Francisco -- earlier this year won a \$1 million state grant to examine climate vulnerabilities and find potential strategies. That work is projected to take nearly three years.

### **Tech companies keeping quiet**

The Army Corps of Engineers in its draft made some estimates, but its study covered only neighborhoods closest to the bay in the southern portion of Silicon Valley.

In that region, a severe storm decades in the future could flood buildings and contents worth \$3 billion, said Mark Bierman, economics section chief in the Army Corps' San Francisco office. If the flood hits water treatment plants in Palo Alto, Sunnyvale and San Jose-Santa Clara, the total value at risk "more than doubles," he said.

Water could cover Interstate Highway 101 and state Route 237, he said. About 700,000 trips are made daily on the two freeways.

"A large enough storm will put a foot or more of water on the highway," Bierman said.

Tech companies wouldn't discuss those potential perils. Facebook, Google, Yahoo and LinkedIn declined to comment or didn't respond to requests for information. At Intuit, spokeswoman Holly Perez said, "We are thinking about this and are in the process of better understanding the science and implications behind it."

Companies also haven't shared their thinking on climate with a local business trade association, the Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

"They've been shy with us so far," said Mike Mielke, vice president for environmental programs and policy at the group. "In general, my feeling is that folks do get it in Silicon Valley," he added. "They don't have their heads in the sand. ... It's just a question of priorities and finding the right place and the right time to focus on it."

### **Sen. Feinstein wants action**

Some are pushing businesses to get involved more rapidly.

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) in April urged companies to partner in raising money for better levees in the region. Those could cost \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion, said Steven McCormick, president of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, a Palo Alto, Calif.-based group focused in part on environmental conservation.

At Feinstein's request, McCormick said, the foundation is leading an effort to bring businesses, local governments, residents and others together "and make sure people understand what's at risk." To win federal and state help in the future, he said, there likely needs to be a "commitment of significant funding locally."

But among residents and businesses, McCormick said, there is "very, very, very little" grasp of what climate change could bring to the area. "What would happen if there was even modest sea level rise is just not in people's mindset or understanding," McCormick said.

Likewise, it's challenging to persuade businesses to act when extreme sea level rise is decades off, McCormick and Mielke said.

"When you talk about a 50-year time horizon in terms of sea level rise, people's eyes sort of glaze over because that's too long for planning," Mielke said, adding that most businesses don't strategize more than five years out.

Superstorm Sandy, however, sounded alarms for some.

"There are a lot more people suddenly aware of places that might be at risk" for an unusual event, said David Lewis, executive director of Save the Bay, a local environmental group. While the West Coast doesn't have hurricanes, he said, there are wind-driven storms. And an earthquake could buckle levees.

"If sea level is higher, then more areas are at risk of flooding, including at risk of flooding from a levee that breaks as a result of an earthquake," Lewis said.

The Moore Foundation is commissioning studies to quantify climate threats and potential solutions. By the end of 2013, it hopes to present local businesses with options. McClintock said he plans to make a cost-benefit argument about why action is needed.

### **'Significant risk' for some**

A total of 257 technology companies located in the flood zone are at "significant risk," Mielke said. Of those, seven or eight are "particularly vulnerable," he said.

Mielke didn't identify those companies. But the Army Corps of Engineers in its draft study found that in the southern portion of Silicon Valley, companies in danger of inundation during a severe storm 50 years from now include Yahoo, Fujitsu, Infinera and Texas Instruments.

Most of those sit steps from San Francisco Bay in Sunnyvale. Google and LinkedIn are about 10 minutes north of there, in the Shoreline Technology Park section of Mountain View. Both companies are housed slightly downhill from a golf course that is next to the bay.

There are levees, but with sea level rise and a major storm, "the bay could be overtopped and would be knocking at Google's doorstep shortly," said John Bourgeois, executive project manager with the California Coastal Conservancy.

Google's headquarters sits on a mound that's above street level, which should keep the company dry over the next few decades, Bierman said. But flooding could be just a matter of time without changes in protection, he said.

"With sea level rise, no one in that zone is risk-free," Bierman said.

Theoretically, businesses could choose to move out of the flood zone when sea levels become more of a threat, said McCormick with the Moore Foundation. But there's not much land available at higher elevations, he said.

"An individual company may think, 'Well, I could move.' But when you start thinking, if all of those companies are going to move, where are they all going to go?" McCormick said.

### **New levee near Facebook?**

The San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority -- an alliance of local water and flood control agencies -- is studying the feasibility of building a new levee in the Menlo Park area.

"This right here we're looking at is actually below sea level," the group's executive director, Len Materman, said last month as he gestured at the wildlife refuge that's in front of Facebook's campus. "It doesn't take a lot of water for an area that's at or below sea level to be totally inundated."

The San Francisco Bay is just outside that refuge. Without the existing salt pond levees, Materman said, a high tide or tsunami could swamp the area and flood across to the freeway more than a mile away.

The Joint Powers Authority has had only preliminary conversations with Facebook about a new barricade, Materman said.

"I know that they want to bring in more employees ... that's their priority," Materman said. "Their priority is not flood protection or ecosystem protection. Their top priority is not what we're doing. We're proceeding. We hope to do it with the benefit of Facebook's participation."

Right now, however, there's only money to study and develop plans for a levee. The Joint Powers Authority would need to find funding to actually built the barricade. That could involve asking residents to raise their taxes, Materman said.

A proposal could be "targeted to a selection of parcels that pay a much, much higher and escalating amount in flood insurance and are otherwise directly benefited by the [levee] project," he said.

"So we are very hopeful that it can get the required two-thirds vote" for a special tax, or a majority vote for an assessment of the amount needed, Materman said.

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February 3, 2013

# Cuomo Seeking Home Buyouts in Flood Zones

By **THOMAS KAPLAN**

ALBANY — Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#) is proposing to spend as much as \$400 million to purchase homes wrecked by [Hurricane Sandy](#), have them demolished and then preserve the flood-prone land permanently, as undeveloped coastline.

The purchase program, which still requires approval from federal officials, would be among the most ambitious ever undertaken, not only in scale but also in how Mr. Cuomo would be using the money to begin reshaping coastal land use. Residents living in flood plains with homes that were significantly damaged would be offered the pre-storm value of their houses to relocate; those in even more vulnerable areas would be offered a bonus to sell; and in a small number of highly flood-prone areas, the state would double the bonus if an entire block of homeowners agreed to leave.

The land would never be built on again. Some properties could be turned into dunes, wetlands or other natural buffers that would help protect coastal communities from ferocious storms; other parcels could be combined and turned into public parkland.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, which swept through the region on Oct. 29, Mr. Cuomo has adamantly maintained that New York needs to reconsider the way it develops its coast. He has repeatedly spoken, in blunt terms, about the consequences of climate change, noting that he has responded to more extreme weather in his first two years as governor than his father, Mario M. Cuomo, did in his 12 years in the job. Last month, in his [State of the State address](#), he raised the prospect of home buyouts, declaring “there are some parcels that Mother Nature owns.”

“She may only visit once every few years,” Mr. Cuomo said, “but she owns the parcel and when she comes to visit, she visits.”

Mr. Cuomo’s proposal comes as lawmakers, disaster experts and residents debate what steps New York should take to fortify itself against extreme weather. The Cuomo administration [has enlisted experts](#) to study a range of approaches, from installing storm barriers with movable gates to returning oyster beds to some of the state’s shoreline.

Any reshaping of the coastline will be not only costly, but also difficult. Many residents of

shoreline communities in New York City and on Long Island live in homes that have been passed along from generation to generation, and are not eager to hear government officials suggest that they move elsewhere, even voluntarily.

“There is a loyalty here,” said Harvey Weisenberg, a longtime lifeguard in Long Beach, N.Y., who represents the storm-tossed community in the State Assembly, as a Democrat. “There’s an expression: we have the sand in our shoes. Once you’re here, you never want to leave, and if you do leave, you want to come back.”

Aides to Mr. Cuomo met with federal officials in Washington on Friday to present their hurricane response plan, including the proposed buyout program, which would be paid for using a portion of [the \\$51 billion disaster relief package approved by Congress last week](#).

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has [financed the purchase of homes](#) in disaster-stricken areas for two decades. Hundreds of property owners in upstate New York decided to pursue buyouts after Tropical Storms Irene and Lee, though no sales have been finalized, according to state emergency management officials.

Mr. Cuomo is proposing a far broader program for homeowners affected by Hurricane Sandy, using money from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, an agency Mr. Cuomo once headed.

The buyout program requires approval from the federal housing agency. The governor’s office said federal officials seemed receptive to their proposal, and that Mr. Cuomo hoped the program would be approved and that he could announce details in the next two weeks.

A spokesman for the Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force, which President Obama created in December, said Sunday that it is too soon to say whether the state will be allowed to proceed.

“It’s premature to speculate on whether this particular plan would be approved,” the spokesman, Brendan C. Gilfillan, said by e-mail. Mr. Gilfillan said that the federal housing agency needed some time because “prior to Friday, New York state had been slower to share its plans” than New York City and New Jersey; the Cuomo administration said it is in regular communication with federal officials about its plans, and believes it is moving more quickly than other jurisdictions.

For the 10,000 or so homes in the 100-year flood plain that were substantially damaged by Hurricane Sandy, Mr. Cuomo would offer owners the pre-storm full market value of their houses. Homeowners who chose to relocate within their home county would receive a 5 percent bonus above the market value, as part of a government effort to encourage them to



stay nearby. State officials said they were planning for the possibility that 10 to 15 percent of those eligible would take the buyout.

Residents of more vulnerable areas would receive a further enticement: they would be allowed to sell their homes even if the homes suffered little, or possibly even no, damage from the hurricane, and the state would pay them an additional 10 percent bonus, above market value, to sweeten the deal.

In a few dozen blocks located in areas of extreme risk, the state would offer another 10 percent bonus if every homeowner on the block agreed to sell. Local officials would be expected to determine how best to use the new open space, though they would not be allowed to build on it.

Lawmakers from storm-ravaged neighborhoods said they welcomed the program, though, in most cases, they expected a relatively small number of residents to participate. They said buyouts could appeal to residents worried about rising flood insurance premiums, as well as those who have listed their homes for sale in recent months, only to find potential buyers willing to pay only a fraction of what they might have offered before the storm. (The program is not targeted at [the most expensive waterfront homes](#); it would cap the payments for houses at around the median home value in a given neighborhood.)

On the eastern shore of Staten Island, virtually an entire neighborhood, the Fox Beach section of Oakwood Beach, has decided it wants to move. In the neighborhood, which has long been tormented by routine flooding as well as brush fires, 133 of 165 households have signed up to take a buyout if one is offered, according to Joseph Tirone Jr., the leader of the [Oakwood Beach Buyout Committee](#).

“These people have been so beat up,” said Mr. Tirone, a real estate investor who owns a bungalow on Fox Beach Avenue that flooded during the storm. “It’s just gotten to be too much.”

Another committee member, Tina Downer, said, simply, “We don’t have the fight enough to stay any more.” Ms. Downer said her house, set about 300 yards from the shoreline, was inundated by a storm surge of at least 13 feet, and said she has now concluded that the neighborhood should “return to nature and do what it was intended to do, which is to be a sponge.”

But in the Rockaways, Cynthia Koulouris, a resident for 41 years, said she was not going anywhere, even though her basement flooded and her neighbor’s house burned down during the storm.

“Nobody wants to leave here,” she said. “Where would I go? To Astoria? To Brooklyn? No!”

State Senator Joseph P. Addabbo Jr., a Democrat who represents Howard Beach, Broad Channel and the Rockaways, said that in [his district](#) of more than 300,000 people, perhaps three had asked him for information about selling their homes to the government. “These are residents that chose to live by the water,” he said. “They’re not going anywhere.”

*Kirk Semple and Vivian Yee contributed reporting from New York.*

## [The Benicia Herald](#)

**“Red Baron” debate resumes**



“THE RED BARON,” an abandoned fishing vessel off West C Street, is admired by artists but many residents would like to see it removed.

*File photo*

## □ City Council hears pros, cons of status quo

*By Donna Beth Weilenman  
Staff Reporter*

Those who favor the removal of a pair of stationary vessels off West C Street consider them to be polluting eyesores.

At the opposite side of the issue are those who consider the craft to be picturesque attractions and reminders of the city’s industrial past.

Both sides took advantage of the public comment portion of Tuesday night’s City Council meeting to air their points on the matter.

But the Council was prevented by law from taking any action, because the concern was not on the meeting’s agenda.

Though conditions of the water off West C Street have been subject of discussion — as well as cleanup — since the 1990s, the matter reignited public debate Nov. 24.

That’s when several artists gathered near the shoreline for a plein air “paint-out,” combining outdoor art with the chance to ask the public to support saving the Red Baron, an old fishing boat, and a barge and crane that are frequent subjects of their and others’ paintings.

The artists had learned that the the Bay Conservation and Development Commission had a chance to use CalRecycle funds to remove the immobile vessels as part of the BCDC’s goal of cleaning up Bay Area waters of abandoned derelict boats and ships.

The agency considers the vessels off West C Street to be “fill,” placed without permit, and has been moving toward their removal from city right-of-way and others’ underwater platted property.

Elliott Rapp, a 25-year Benicia resident, has long endorsed the removal of the boatyard that was built in 1958 by Joe Garske on his property, which has been in industrial use since 1886, according to city records.

“I love Benicia and historical places,” Rapp said.

But he told the Council he favored removing the boatyard, which house mover Phil Joy has owned since he bought the marine services business from Garske in 2005.

Rapp called for the “removal of other junk that creates an eyesore.” Instead, Benicia should have a clean waterfront that all could enjoy and would “encourage people to come.”

He asked why those who like the fishing boat, crane and barge “focus on old rusting junk?” Rather than scenic, he called the Red Baron “a rusting old boat,” and told the Council that those who consider the crane historic are mistaken.

“What you have is an eyesore,” he said, made up of dilapidated houses, rusting cars and an old truck “parked on the water.”

He said, "The shoreline is for all to enjoy."

Instead, he said, "you can't sail, fish or swim," and he blamed the vessels for spreading pollution in the water.

"This is your city. You're in charge," Rapp said, asking that the Council put the matter on a future meeting's agenda. "People of Benicia want the waterways clean."

While BCDC and city staff learned that CalRecycle had money available for the removal of the vessels from the water off West C Street, including city property, "CalRecycle did not share that there was a time frame," City Manager Brad Kilger said.

By Dec. 13, 2012, Charlie Knox, Benicia director of Community Development, announced that the work couldn't be finished before CalRecycle's agreement with a construction contractor expired.

"CalRecycle had run out of time to arrange for work to be done during the January daytime low tides," he said. The construction contract concluded Feb. 1.

While Mark Oldfield, CalRecycle acting assistant director of public affairs, said there's a chance the agency might underwrite the cleanup in the future, its money is assigned to contract projects throughout the state, and there are no guarantees the city would get another chance at it.

Knox said last fall that BCDC had not told him of a scope of work or a deadline by which the cleanup must be done. Before the city would proceed, he said, Benicia and BCDC would need to map out a strategy for the project.

That included "a dialogue with our residents," Knox said.

Kilger said Tuesday that cleanup in the area, including the water off Phil Joy's boatyard, "has been occurring for many years."

At the moment, the city has no funds to pay for the project, and the next available CalRecycle funding cycle won't happen until September, he said.

Benicia's delicately balanced 2012-13 budget was dealt a significant blow last September when city staff learned that the city's share of Solano County property tax revenues would come up more than \$800,000 shy of projections. Other revenue shortfalls are putting the budget more than \$1 million short of balance.

On top of that, the city faces a future bill of \$417,000 to move its water lines out of the way of the first phase of a complex highway construction project.

Despite Caltrans's insistence that the city must pay for the move, the Council expressed hope Tuesday that some other funding can be found before the money comes from the city water enterprise fund.

Meanwhile, the vessels serve a purpose beyond being models for an artist's picture, Kilger said.

They're also a breakwater that protects the shoreline, including Joy's boatyard, from wave action. Joy has said that without some protection from the movement of water, he would be unable to operate the marine services business he bought from Garske.

Kilger said city staff members have been communicating regularly with those of BCDC and CalRecycle. "We have nothing new to report," he said.



On the other hand, activities that were sparked with the artists' discovery of the chance that the ships may disappear from near the shoreline pointed to an important omission, "a lack of public process," Kilger said.

In prior arrangements, the Council had approved grants after members of the public were allowed to comment on a project.

Rapp said the breakwater would be protecting a private business, and reminded the panel, "The crane was put there illegally on city property." He asked why citizens should have to pay for its removal.

Joan Malone, saying she spoke for several others at the meeting, reminded the Council that Brad McCrea, BCDC director of regulatory affairs, had said "BCDC has always considered this site and the derelict vessels to be one of its most egregious legacy violations."

She said his statement had alarmed her.



*Rolando Barrero*

She told the Council how BCDC has had an enforcement case against Garske's boat yard cove since 1992, and described how Knox and Todd Thalhamer, CalRecycle waste management engineer, had walked to the barge and crane late last year.

Thalhamer had characterized the barge and crane as an "environmental nightmare" and "toxic to aquatic life," she said. The vessels at the end of West C Street belong in "a proper disposal facility," she said.

Malone said Thalhamer had said CalRecycle would build a seawall of riprap, or chunks of concrete, to protect the boatyard.

"The city did not act, the funding was lost and Phil Joy and the city could be responsible for the removal," she said. "I'm furious. The city needs to be ready to move and be ready the next time money is available."

Joy has said his property has been cleaned of most of the objects that had concerned BCDC, except for a few pilings he's making plans to address.

Denise Eucchianeri expressed admiration for the city's new bus stop construction on Military West and First Street, new vintage-looking "Benicia blue" street lamps that replace Caltrans's silver cobra-style lamps, and the way First Street's trees have been wrapped in white lights that come on each evening.

"That said, I don't understand how those improvements are compatible with the rusting junk at the boatyard," she said. "Do you want pretty lights and transit centers, or to hold onto the boatyard and junk yard downtown?"

But supporters of the Red Baron's presence and that of the old barge and crane were present Tuesday as well.

"When I moved to Benicia 10 years ago, it had open spaces, and you could watch the sun set," Nikki Basch-Davis said.

Since then, the city has seen a buildup of large stores and condominiums, she said.

She said her property is in the city's downtown, near Joy's boatyard, and she observes many visitors who come to First Street.

"They don't comment on the storefronts and the condominiums," she said. "They speak of the history and the downtown."

She acknowledged those living within eyesight of the cove off West C Street who have said they don't like the appearance of the old boat and barge.

But Basch-Davis said she has heard others say they consider those people's homes eyesores, too.

"It's clearly in the eye of the beholder," she said.

Bob Nelson said he had not considered "entering the fray on the boatyard," but reminded the Council that from Benicia's earliest years, "we have had a working waterfront."

First Street and other parts of the city once were active with trains, ferries, "a huge tannery operation" and boat building.

"This is the last remnants of anything like that," he said. "If you want to see Belvedere," he said, referring to an upscale Marin County community, "go to Belvedere."

Sue Wilson, a fourth-generation Californian who co-founded a First Street business in Benicia, said "there have been assertions" about the conditions caused by the old vessels, "but no evidence."

She urged "a thoughtful approach" that included "gathering of facts."

Wilson praised the Council. "You should be proud of the way you handled the process. Now there will be time for public discussions."

An open-air artist who is a member of the Plein Air Gallery, she said she also sees those who visit Benicia's downtown area.

"They don't have a history book in their hands," she said. "Instead, they come down and they see it come alive."



Among the views that inspire them are the old boatyard and the Red Baron, she said. “And they connect, because it’s authenticity — it’s real. If they cleaned it up, it would be worthless.”

She bristled that some people disregard the views of artists who support keeping the Red Baron and old barge as part of the waterscape.

“People throw away (an) artist’s opinion as if it’s not valued,” she said. Few artists make a living solely from their art — those who do are famous, she said.

Most of them work, in a variety of careers from raising families to being engineers, she said.

“Artists come from all walks of life,’ she said. “Please don’t throw aside the artists’ comments.”

Bonnie Silveria was the sole speaker who addressed the history of the land around the West C Street cove.

A lifelong Benicia resident, she has been part of Benicia’s Historic Preservation Advisory Committee, the Historic Preservation Commission, Benicia Historical Society and the Carquinez Strait Preservation Trust.

She told the Council that the land in question had not always been a boatyard, though it had an industrial-type use in its past.

“It was a lumber yard,” she said. The boatyard didn’t arrive until the 1950s, she said.

Benicia’s earlier boat-building operation once was at West 12th Street, and the remains of that industry can be seen there at low tide, she said.

Cottages built along West Ninth and 10th streets were once called “shipyard cottages,” because shipyard employees lived in them, Silveria said.

Since then, she said, those small, old homes from Benicia’s industrial past “have been McMansioned.”

## **San Francisco Bay named a 'wetland of importance'**

*Posted:*

MercuryNews.com

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SAN FRANCISCO -- The San Francisco Bay estuary has been added to a list of protected wetlands under a 1971 international treaty among 163 countries meant to limit damaging development along ecologically important waterways.

Ramsar Convention officials on Friday announced the U.S. government had added the bay as the nation's 35th "wetland of importance" under the treaty.

The designation means the country is committed to not promoting projects that alter designated ecosystems.

The San Francisco Bay estuary is the largest on the U.S. Pacific coast, and comprises 77-percent of California's remaining wetland areas. It is home to more than 1,000 animal species.

Melissa Pitkin, spokeswoman for PRBO Conservation Science, said decades of research informed this designation, and while it doesn't come with new regulations, it helps bolster local conservation efforts through international pressure.

## **ViewPoints: Strategic location keeps Martinez waterfront plans moving forward**

*San Jose Mercury News*  
*Posted:*

MercuryNews.com

Every year all transportation agencies in the nine Bay Area counties are required by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to adopt a Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP).

This plan is the blueprint for each and every transit provider such as BART, County Connection, Muni, AC Transit, etc., for the next 10-15 years. This year, the Water Emergency Transit Authority (WETA) developed its first SRTP.

For several years the city of Martinez has been in WETA's plans for the expansion of ferry service in Contra Costa County, along with Antioch and Hercules.

They have completed studies on the most advantageous locations for ferry terminals in each community and authorized the funding for the required environmental work that goes along with any kind of waterfront development.

However, in the first draft version of WETA's transit plan, Martinez, Antioch and Hercules were left out of the report, signaling that WETA was dropping their plans for expansion to the East Bay area.

This was a huge setback for our plans to revitalize the Martinez waterfront and downtown.

Martinez immediately joined forces with Antioch to convince WETA to put us back in their short-range plans for expansion of ferry service. One of our core arguments was that the "E" in their name was being ignored.

The ferry agency was previously known as just Water Transit Authority (WTA). The "E" (emergency) was added when former Assemblyman Tom Torlakson carried a bill in 2007 that created a Bay Area water transit system capable of responding to emergencies or disasters affecting the transportation system in the region as a whole.

Martinez is the county seat and home to the Regional Medical Center, Office of the Sheriff, and Office of Emergency Services.

In the case of an emergency or disaster, transportation in and out of these facilities will be very important. Water transportation might be the only functioning system in the Bay Area.

State Sen. Mark DeSaulnier convened a meeting of all of the stakeholders, including representatives of Martinez, Antioch, Contra Costa County and WETA staff and commissioners. The result of that meeting and subsequent communication between the parties was the reinstatement of Martinez, Antioch and Hercules to the SRTP, and the inclusion of \$25 million for expansion of ferry service to our cities.

However, WETA has made it clear that these monies can only be used for capital projects such as ferries, ferry terminals, landings, parking areas and the design work that they require. It will be up to the cities to find the funding to operate the expanded system.

The additional ½-cent sales tax that you pay every time you buy something in Contra Costa County (also known as Measure J) is dedicated to transportation and road improvements in every one of our communities.

The Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) administers this tax money and has funded a multitude of transportation projects, including the extension of BART to East Contra Costa County, the fourth bore of the Caldecott Tunnel and the Martinez Intermodal Station.

When Measure J was being crafted for the ballot several years ago, West Contra Costa County cities inserted a water transit component in their "wish list" which now is available for their use when needed. Measure J has \$45 million available for ferry service from Richmond, Hercules or Rodeo to San Francisco.

Martinez and Antioch are exploring the possibility of doing the same with the reauthorization of Measure J in the future. Unfortunately, the fare box does not cover the cost of providing any type of public transit and it must be augmented with other types of public funding.

With ferry service on the distant horizon, Martinez is working very hard to find solutions to its aging marina. A partial dredge of the marina was just completed and boaters can now navigate in and out of the harbor during high and low tide.

State Sen. Lois Wolk will be touring the Martinez waterfront with me next week to get a firsthand view of our beautiful shoreline and the challenges we face to improve it.

The Martinez waterfront and marina are strategically located 32 miles northeast of San Francisco and 50 miles from Sacramento, which provides convenient access to the Delta and San Francisco Bay.

Even in its current condition, more than 6,000 boaters use the marina each year and an average of 200 boats rent slips. Of those slip renters, 36 percent are Martinez residents, 37 percent are from the East Bay Area (primarily Contra Costa County), 20 percent are from other parts of the Bay Area, and 7 percent are from inland Northern California from Redding to Sacramento.

One major improvement at the waterfront we hope to see this summer is the commencement of construction on a building that will house a new restaurant. The location will be generally in area of the former Albatross site.

If our strategic plans for the waterfront keep moving forward, watch for many more improvements over the next few years.

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